

Acts Bible Study

Class 3 Teacher Notes Acts Chapter 1

Acts Chapter and verse:

--1.1-2 "The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach..." (Acts 1.1-2). St. Chrysostom brings to our attention that St. Luke refers first to the Gospel to show that the Acts account is inseparably connected with the same Lord Jesus Christ of the Gospels, and thus Acts is a continuation of the account of the Gospels, the Gospels being the "account...of all that Jesus began both to do and teach until the day he was taken up." St. Chrysostom thinks that we must refer back to Luke 1.1-3, where Luke gives credit of the account as it was "delivered to us" by those who were from the beginning "eyewitnesses and ministers of the word." Luke and Acts are both addressed to Theophilus. St. Bede the Venerable offers this observation: "Theophilus means lover of God, or beloved of God. Therefore, anyone who is a lover of God may believe that this [work] was written for him, because the physician Luke wrote it in order that he [the reader] might find health for his soul." And so if the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles are addressed to a first century Gentile named Theophilus, they also are addressed to all those who love God, who seek to be truly friends of God. But who is ultimately the Lover of God? Is it not the Bride of God the Word? Thus know that above, the Theophilus that Luke addresses is the Bride of Christ, the Holy Church.

--1.3 Notice "infallible proofs" are the signs of the Resurrection, including the Paschal appearances, the showing of the wounds, and also the miraculous appearances and departures during the 40 days, the Ascension, and the fulfillment of the promise in the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost.

--1.8 The Apostles were given *power* to be *witnesses* to our Lord, which is given by the Holy Spirit, the "The Spirit of the Father...the Spirit of salvation...who has created the hearts of the Apostles pure, being renewed in the faithful, whose commands are light and peace" (Pentecost Matins).

--1.9 The Ascension--is recorded in Mark and Luke, and mentioned in St. John, as foretold by Jesus: "I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God." St. Leo the Great has this to say about the Ascension: "The Son of Man was revealed as Son of God in a more perfect and transcendent way once he had entered into his Father's glory; he now began to be indescribably more present in

his divinity to those from whom He was further removed in his humanity...reached not by physical handling but by spiritual discernment." We read this also from St. Leo with regard to the Ascension: "And so our Redeemer's visible presence has passed into the sacraments [or 'mysteries']," whereby our spiritual discernment is able to absorb more of the Divine side of the Lord (Divine Energies) as opposed to when He walked the earth, and was accessible to few at one time and only in one part of the world, but now everywhere, being bodily and spiritually on altars and in the very being of the faithful throughout the world.

--1.11 "This same Jesus...will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" is partially fulfilled in Acts 7.55-56, when Stephen sees the Lord. It was not only the Last day that the angel referred to when he said: why do you stand looking into heaven, but the eschaton of the 8th day, as Father Schmemmann has taught us, is realized in the Eucharist every Sunday and Feast day, when our Lord comes to us as He went into heaven: that is, in body, soul and divinity, in a glorious mystery!

--1.12-15 The Paschal-Pentecostal gathering, according to the book of Acts, includes the Apostles, "the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and with His brothers," as well as about 120 followers of Christ. This is the last time that the Most-Holy Mary is expressly mentioned in the New Testament. Talk about the Apostles, the women, the Panagia, and the Brethren of the Lord (James the Just will be discussed at a later class in more detail, but will be touched upon here.

--1.20 "Let another take his office" (lit. episcopate--bishopric), pointing to the fact that the episcopal office, the office of a bishop, is a continuation of the Apostolic office.



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